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[Reprinted from THE MEDICAL NEWS, December 17, 1892.]

**SOME PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THE SPREAD
OF CONTAGIOUS DISEASES, ESPECIALLY
IN CHILDREN.**

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THE surgeon and the obstetrician utilize the means that experiment and observation have proved necessary to render their work aseptic. In case of the entrance of diseased germs, they take prompt means to destroy them, or to neutralize their effects. It behooves us, who practise among children suffering from contagious diseases, to inquire if we are equally careful.

The surgeon about to open an abdominal cavity removes all possible sources of infection from his patient's person and environment, and goes to his work with clean linen and clean hands. Do we do likewise?

Some time ago a prominent operator sent me an invitation to witness an abdominal section, adding in his note, "Provided you have not visited a case of scarlet fever or other contagious disease during the last twenty-four hours." I could not but think, If such precaution is necessary to insure the safety of this patient, what are the risks to the little children that I shall visit after seeing the case of



scarlet fever or other contagious disease, and whose systems are fertile soils for the poison to develop in?

The danger of such conveyance is great, as physicians with large family practice know, and many, like myself, have been taught the lesson by sad experience. I can recall several instances in which the children of physicians have fallen victims to scarlet fever and diphtheria, the cause being clearly traced to disease brought home by their fathers.

Let me illustrate this danger by a description of a physician's visit to a case of diphtheria. The doctor enters the house, removes his hat, overcoat, and gloves, and is shown into the room containing the patient, and comes into direct contact with the atmosphere loaded with the germs of the disease. His hair, woollen clothing, hands, etc., must more or less absorb the poison, in his stay of about fifteen minutes. What does he then do? He replaces his overcoat, carefully buttoning it up, as if to keep as many of the germs as possible warm and well protected. He puts on his hat as he crosses the threshold, jumps into his carriage, covers himself with robes, and drives to his next patient; enters, takes off his hat and coat, and woe to any little ones who live in that house! The doctor has probably that with him which will more likely kill than cure.

What should be done to diminish this danger? Stay no longer in a house containing a contagious disease than is absolutely necessary. Do not remove your hat or unbutton your coat in that house. After examining the patient go down stairs, preferably at an open door or window, and give directions for

treatment. The family of the patient will respect you for the care you exercise, when you explain the reason. Drive without covering with robes to your next patient, and be sure that patient is not a child. Never allow a messenger from a case of contagious disease to call or wait for you *in* your office. Instruct him to bring written messages and leave them at your door. If the messenger wishes to speak to you, tell him to wait outside your office and ask the servant to call you to the door.

I have more than once been startled on entering my office to see a man or woman whom I knew had been constantly for days and nights nursing a bad case of diphtheria, sitting complacently alongside of two or three little children, all waiting to see me. On several occasions mothers have brought children, suffering from severe attacks of diphtheria, to my office and waited to see me.

When you come home from a case of contagious disease, besides washing your hands, face, and head with soap and water, hang up your hat and coat in the air, and put on a fresh coat.

I did this some time ago and forgot to bring them in when I went to bed. It rained hard all night—but better lose a hat and coat than a patient!

If you return late at night from a case of contagious disease, besides washing, undress before going into the room where your children are. Keep your own children out of your office, and do not take them in the carriage with you when visiting patients. How do you know but some of your calls may be upon those with contagious diseases?

Our Board of Health instructs us, in cases of

contagious disease, to forbid the children of the household to attend school or other places of public resort. This is a wise precaution, and the doctor, when he has been in contact with contagious disease, should, as far as possible, follow the advice given to the children.

We are told that familiarity with crime leads us to endure it. Likewise familiarity with contagious disease is likely to make us at times careless in using the means necessary to prevent its spread. Physicians are but mortals, and while as a body they are conscientious in the discharge of their duties, candor compels me to confess that they are not at all times as careful as they should be.

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